

## INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY STAFF

20 March 1975

NOTE FOR: General Wilson/ [ ]

As you will recall, earlier this week we received a letter from [ ] of DIA/DE defending the DIE "PRC Strategic Nuclear Forces: How Much Is Enough?" which had been criticized in the RONI for giving the impression of a much broader evidential base than actually exists. You advised us to respond directly and we have.

On Thursday, 20 March, [ ] invited [ ] to lunch and discussed the matter with him. The main issue was that some of the wording used and the manner in which the material was presented did not allow a clear distinction to be made between judgments based on evidence and those based on assumptions. [ ] quickly saw the problem and agreed that the lines should be sharply drawn.

[ ] emphasized the desirability of such dialogues and asked [ ] to relay our sentiments to all elements of DIA/DE.

INFORMATION

**CONFIDENTIAL**

19 March 1975

Dear [ ]

[ ] passed along to me your note of 18 March concerning the [ ]

I think that you are largely right when you say that the Post Mortem overlooked the inexperience of many analysts working on [ ] and the consequences thereof. We were at least in part aware of this problem. We did not address it, however, partly because we were wary of undertaking the kind of extensive research required to document a conclusion along the lines you suggest. We would have had to acquire an array of statistics concerning the experience of analysts not only in OCI but also in INR and DIA. It may also have been because we were reluctant to deal "in public" with the management problems of specific organizations (e.g., OCI). There may be one additional point: I am not sure that [ ] is a desirable illustration of your point since there are so few analysts with real expertise concerning [ ]

But I am moved by your thoughtful comments to pursue your notion that "if we wish to develop our analysts as interchangeable cogs in the mechanism we should not worry too much about 'intelligence failures' because this is part of the trade-off." We will certainly keep it in mind during our next post mortem, and I am pondering ways to look into the matter sooner than that.

In any event, thanks for your comments. I would like very much to have your permission to reproduce them in the next issue of our Review of National Intelligence, which, as you may know, excerpted portions of the conclusions of the [ ] Please let me know. (The RONI, by the way, could provide us with an appropriate medium for further exploration of this problem.)

With regards,

[ ]  
Chief, Product Review Division

18 March 1975

Dear [REDACTED]

This is an informal note to call attention to one aspect of the [REDACTED] which I think has been overlooked.

The covering memo on that report notes that the analysts' "inability to foresee critical events -- in the face of mounting evidence -- seems to rest in part on the familiar analytical bias that ultimately reason and rationality will prevail." I have no quarrel with that as far as it goes.

I submit that a key element, however, has been overlooked. So far as I know, the analysts were relatively new and inexperienced in the area and their supervisors were no better equipped. The branches concerned had been reorganized and personnel transferred elsewhere. I speak from some experience and with a touch of special pleading. For many years I was Chief of GFI Branch in OCI and the analysts handling [REDACTED] were equally superannuated. I cannot myself imagine assuming at any time that "ultimately reason and rationality will prevail," nor would any of my analysts. We had lived through too many similar crises involving [REDACTED] to take any except [REDACTED]

The critical nature <sup>of</sup> area familiarity is tacitly recognized on page 15 of the Post Mortem where it is noted: "Those who were directly concerned with the [REDACTED] issue, particularly foreign service officers with solid backgrounds in the area, had apparently long since made up their minds that a showdown between [REDACTED] was inevitable and did not look to finished intelligence for primary guidance." If finished intelligence does not provide primary guidance, what does? In this case, the FSO's knowledge and experience. If our analysts cannot match that we may as well go out of business.

But enough of that. I hope I have made my point: If for reasons of personnel flexibility we wish to develop our analysts as interchangeable cogs in the mechanism we should not worry too much about

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"intelligence failures" because this is part of the trade-off. If, however, such a failure is important enough to warrant a post mortem then the analytical and substantive experience of the analysts ought to be factored in.



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